

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

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SUBJECT : BAHRAIN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: ZEDALIS VISIT

REF : (A) STATE 188331 (B) MANAMA 1023

1. JOHN ZEDALIS (SER/ENGR) MADE A USEFUL THREE-DAY VISIT TO BAHRAIN AUGUST 16-19. HE AND CHARGE HAD MEETINGS WITH SHAIKH KHALIFA BIN SALMAN AL KHALIFA (GOB PROJECT MANAGER AND ASST. UNDER SECRETARY FOR OIL AND INDUSTRIES), ABDULAZIZ ALI MIRZA (DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRIES), AND WERE TAKEN ON EXTENSIVE SITE TOURS BY ABDULLAH AL-ABSI, WHO HAS BEEN TENTATIVELY IDENTIFIED AS THE GENERAL MANAGER OF THE TO-BE-FORMED MATERIALS COMPANY. ON-GOING PRIVATE SECTOR BUILDING BLOCK FACTORIES WERE VISITED (RANGING IN SCALE FROM PRIMITIVE HAND-BLOCK MAKING TO SOPHISTICATED US EQUIPMENT), THE GOVERNMENT'S QUARRY, THE ROCK CRUSHER ESTATE, NEWLY SET UP ON THE EASTERN COAST OF BAHRAIN, ETC., AS WELL AS THE CRUMBLING GULF HOTEL.

2. SHAIKH KHALIFA, IN THE COURSE OF OUR CONVERSATIONS, ASKED THAT THE MATERIALS ENGINEER ADVISOR NOT BE SENT TO BAHRAIN BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. HE THOUGHT THE FIRST WEEKS OF JANUARY WOULD BE A GOOD TIME AS THE DATE FOR ESTABLISHING THE COMPANY HAS SLIPPED: HE NOW EXPECTS THAT TO HAPPEN IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1977. HE WANTS THE ADVISOR HERE NOT MORE THAN TWO MONTHS IN ADVANCE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMPANY.

3. SELECTION OF AL-ABSI AS THE GENERAL MANAGER LEADS US TO CONCLUSION THAT PROJECT IS SERIOUS. AL-ABSI HAS BEEN ON
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SECONDMENT TO ABU DHABI/UAE FOR THE PAST NINE YEARS AND HAS

REPRESENTED UAE IN OPEC AND OAPEC MEETINGS. A CHEMIST BY TRAINING, AL-ABSI DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE BACKGROUND IN BUILDING MATERIALS-RELATED MATTERS, BUT IS ONE OF A VERY LIMITED NUMBER OF EXPERIENCED, WELL-EDUCATED BUREAUCRATS IN THE GOB BELOW THE UNDER SECRETARY LEVEL, HIS FAMILY HOLDS SEVERAL KEY POSITIONS IN THE GOB (OLDER BROTHER IS PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER; YOUNGER BROTHER IS LIAISON OFFICER OF BAHRAIN DEFENCE FORCE WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, ETC.)

4. DURING COURSE OF ISLAND TOUR, WE WERE TAKEN TO THE ONE HOUSE IN AWALI WHICH THE GOB HAS ACTUALLY PUT ASIDE FOR THE FIRST ADVISOR TO ARRIVE. IT IS IDENTICAL (I.E., TWO BEDROOMS, MODEST, RENOVATED WOODEN HOUSE) TO THOSE SEEN DURING HOLTWAY VISIT TO BAHRAIN BUT IS FURNITURELESS. SHAIKH KHALIFA HAS ASKED FOR EMBASSY ADVICE AND HELP IN PURCHASING FURNITURE FOR HOUSE, WHICH WE HAVE READILY AGREED TO GIVE.

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